

to believe in the law of karmic retribution, as expounded widely in the Mahayana scriptures? This is what the scripture means when it says: "Honeydew in the present will be an iron ball in the future."²² Hirokuni made Buddha images, copied scriptures, and made offerings to the Three Treasures to repay his father's love²³ and atone for his sin, thereafter turning evil into righteousness.

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On Attaining a Great Fortune Immediately Owing to Devotion to Kannon and Praying for a Share of Benefits¹

In the reign of ex-Emperor Shōhō-ōjin-shōmu² residing at Nara Palace 諾樂宮,³ Miteshiro no Azumabito 御手代東人⁴ went to Mt. Yoshino 吉野山⁵ to practice Buddhist teachings and seek his fortune. Three years passed during which he worshiped Kannon 觀音, reciting the name,⁶ and saying, "Homage to Kannon."⁷ Please give me ten thousand *kan*⁸ of copper coins, ten thousand *koku*⁹ of white rice and many beautiful girls."

At that time, Awata no asomi 粟田朝臣 of the Junior Third Rank¹⁰ had a daughter who was both unmarried and a virgin. She suddenly fell ill in her home in Hirose 廣瀬.¹¹ Her suffering was so great that there seemed no prospect of a cure. Her father sent messengers in all directions to call Buddhist monks¹² and lay brothers.¹³ Azumabito was called and begged to save her by chanting formulas.¹⁴ The power of

22. 現在甘露未來鐵丸. This given as a scriptural passage in this story, but as an ancient proverb in II.9. 甘露 and 鐵丸 are familiar metaphors in scriptures.

23. Gratitude to one's father is one of the four essential kinds of *on*. See Chap. II(2)a, nn. 69, 70.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XVI, 14).

2. See I.5, n. 41.

3. Also written 奈良, 平城.

4. The Miteshiro family descended from kami, according to the *Shinsen shōjiroku*.

5. Including mountains located in present Yoshino-gun, Nara-ken. See I.28, n. 15.

6. 稱禮 devotional rite of reciting Kannon's name while prostrated before the image.

7. 南無, a transliteration of Skt. *namas*.

8. 貫; one *kan* consists of one thousand pieces, *mon*.

9. 石; one *koku* equals about five bushels.

10. Unidentified; Awata no asomi Mahito of the Senior Third Rank may be the person referred to, but he died in 719, before the reign of Emperor Shōmu (724-749).

11. Present Kita-kazuraki-gun, Nara-ken 奈良縣北葛城郡.

12. 禪師 *zenji*; *dhyāna* master.

13. 優婆塞 *ubasoku*.

14. 咒 *ju*; see Chap. I(1)d, n. 97.

the formulas cured the illness, and she fell in love with him, eventually giving herself to him. Her family seized him and kept him confined in a room. Out of her affection, she cried and would not leave the place of his confinement. After a conference, her family decided to free Azumabito and let him marry her and inherit the fortune. He was given the Fifth Rank owing to the report to the Throne.¹⁵

After several years, when she was dying, she called her sister, and said, "I am dying now. I have but one wish; will you listen?" Her sister said, "I will do as you like." Whereupon Azumabito's wife said, "I can never forget my gratitude to Azumabito. I would like to make your daughter his wife and let her be in charge of the household."¹⁶ Faithful to her wish, the sister gave her daughter to Azumabito and put her in charge of the fortune.

Azumabito was richly blessed in this life because of the mysterious power he gained from his devotional practices and the great virtue of Kannon. How can anyone not believe that?

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On Gaining an Immediate Reward for Faith in the Three Treasures, Reverence to Monks, and Having Scriptures Recited¹

In the ninth month of the fourth year of the hare, the fourth year of the Jinki era,² Emperor Shōmu went hunting with his officers in the mountain at Yamamura in Sou upper district 添上郡山村.³ A deer ran into a farmer's house in the village of Hosome 納見里,⁴ and the family killed and ate it without knowing whose it was. Later, when the emperor heard this, he sent messengers to take them prisoner. More than ten men and women met with this misfortune, and they shuddered in fear without any recourse. Their only thought was that nothing but the divine power⁵ of the Three Treasures would save

15. As he became the son-in-law of Awata no asomi, he was given the rank.

16. This story demonstrates the practice of handing down authority for the ancestral cult and the family fortune from the aunt to the niece, which is still common in a priestess' family. See Sakurai Mitsuru, "Mei no chikara: Naka no sumeramikoto o megutte," *Kokugo to kokubungaku*, XLII (No. 12, December 1965), 23-33.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XII, 16).

2. 727.

3. See I.10, n. 2.

4. Present Tenri-shi 天理市, south of Yamamura.

5. 神力.